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ABSTRACT

This guide provides Maryland teachers with information regarding how to evaluate and improve service-learning. Seven suggested practices for school-based service learning were derived from interviews with 80 Maryland teachers actively engaging their students in service learning. These seven best practices, which might provide a framework for development of a quality service-learning program, include: (1) meet a recognized need in the community; (2) achieve curricular objectives throughout service-learning experience; (3) reflect throughout service-learning experience; (4) develop student responsibility; (5) establish community partnerships; (6) plan ahead for service-learning; and (7) equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service. Two or three instructional strategies are given for carrying out each practice. An appendix includes a glossary of terms, other service learning resources, and a materials order form. (MM)

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Maryland's Best Practices:

An Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning

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Maryland's Best Practices:

An Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning

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EDUCATION

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May 1995

Dear Champion of Service:

We are pleased to present a new tool for service-learning. Students can make a tremendous difference in their schools and communities if they are given the opportunity to use their enthusiasm, energy and ideas.

Maryland is a leader in the field of service-learning. We believe it is important for our students not only to understand the concept of citizenship but also to be good citizens by providing needed service to their communities. Teachers around the state have found service-learning to be a highly effective teaching method, adding relevancy to classroom learning.

As the first state to require that all students participate in service-learning to graduate from public high school, we are in the unique position of having thousands of teachers across the state involved in this new method of instruction.

Maryland's Best Practices: An Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning incorporates some of the best thinking on service-learning. With the assistance of eighty teachers, we have created a tool to promote continuous program improvement. The guide includes seven best practices of quality programs. Each best practice is illustrated with approaches and examples to provide the framework for quality service-learning. We hope that this guide inspires you and your students to new heights.

Thank you for supporting quality school-based service-learning.

Sincerely,

Nancy S. Grasmick

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

Maryland's Best Practices:
An Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning

First Edition

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Feedback Form

Please take a few moments to fill out this evaluation and send it to MSSA. Your comments will help us and teachers around Maryland and the country.

1. Was this guide helpful? Yes No

   Comments:_____

2. Did the best practices make you rethink any of your own practices?

   Yes No

   What did it change in your service-learning?_____

3. Share any pitfalls or safety nets you have found in service-learning:

Pitfalls	Safety Nets
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

5. Were any examples especially useful? If so, which one and why?_____

6. What are your suggestions for the next edition?_____

7. If you have a strong example of a best practice, please write it up by following the format in the guide and send it to us!

Optional

Name:_____
School:_____
Address:_____
City/State/Zip:_____

School Phone Number:_____
Subject Taught:_____
Grade Level:_____
County:_____

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Overview of the Guide

The Maryland Best Practices: An Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning is the product of interviews with 80 teachers around the state of Maryland who use service-learning as a teaching method. Everything recommended is based on what teachers are doing and saying about service-learning. This guide gives teachers concrete ways to improve their service-learning practice.

Through service-learning students learn and apply academic, social, and personal skills to improve their community, continue their individual growth, and become active citizens. School-based service-learning is a way to meet curricular objectives while meeting needs in the community. The Maryland Student Service Alliance (MSSA) has trained teachers across the state in service-learning. Founded in 1988 to promote service-learning, MSSA provides technical assistance to teachers as they implement the requirement that students in Maryland participate in service-learning in order to graduate from high school.

Why Did We Write This Guide?

MSSA published this guide in response to teacher inquiries about how to evaluate and improve their service-learning. Since the statewide service-learning graduation requirement was instituted in 1992, thousands of teachers have engaged their students in service-learning around the state. Still, there is wide variation in practice. This guide is an attempt to help teachers evaluate their service-learning and identify specific ways to improve their practice.

This guide is primarily for teachers with some experience in service-learning. If you are brand new to this method, you may want to contact MSSA to get more information: Maryland Student Service Alliance, 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201, (410) 767-0358 or TDD (410) 333-6442.

How Did We Write This Guide?

MSSA began by interviewing 80 teachers around the state of Maryland who are currently engaging their students in service-learning. From the interviews, we

examined the experiences of the teachers who seemed successful and analyzed what they had in common. The seven major themes became the best practices.

To select the 80 teachers, MSSA contacted the Central Office service-learning administrators in each school system. These contacts recommended teachers in their districts who are currently practicing service-learning effectively. Some teachers interviewed are also MSSA Fellows. Fellows are teachers selected to participate in a statewide leadership program because of their innovation in service-learning and eagerness to help other teachers with service-learning through mentoring, workshops, and curriculum development.

When service-learning works, teachers and students can transform the traditional classroom. Students take on new responsibilities in and out of school, and fruitful relationships grow between schools and communities. Most importantly, students begin to understand their roles as citizens of their community, the country, and the world. The Guide gives teachers a way to evaluate and improve service-learning, but enthusiasm is key; it is up to teachers to find the issues that excites both them and their students.

What Are the Best Practices?

The best practices are the essential components of all service-learning. Ideally, every teacher will do every best practice. Because this is not the case in all situations, the best practices are placed in an order of importance for quality service-learning. For instance, the first two best practices -- meeting a need in the community and curricular objectives -- are at the core of quality service-learning. Reflection seems next important because of the difference it can make in student learning and understanding. The rest seemed to fall into place.

The seven best practices for school-based service-learning are:

1. Meet a recognized need in the community
2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning
3. Reflect throughout service-learning experience
4. Develop student responsibility
5. Establish community partnerships
6. Plan ahead for service-learning
7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service

Each of the seven best practices includes two or three approaches or ways to carry out that practice.

What Are the Different Approaches to the Best Practices?

High quality service-learning is linked to the community, and the needs of each community may dictate a different path to the best practice. We call these different paths "approaches." The two or three approaches for each best practice give teachers choices to carry out service-learning that is *appropriate to their situations.* With each approach is an example of a Maryland teacher implementing service-learning using that approach.

Although all approaches lead to the best practice, some approaches are better than others. Throughout this process of developing the best practices, the themes of teacher, student, and community involvement; time spent on service-learning; and depth of commitment to the community problem have continued to resurface. The final approach of each best practice moves to a more integrated service-learning which draws on all participants to play an important role and examine issues at a deeper level. Every teacher may not achieve the highest level of approach in each best practice, but we hope that teachers will constantly evaluate their service-learning to see where they might improve.

Most of the service-learning experiences described in the approaches are infused into the curriculum. That means that service-learning is incorporated into the curriculum of a subject and used as a method to achieve course objectives. However, sometimes schools offer special classes in service-learning which concentrate on an issue like peer mediation or tutoring. Others promote independent service experiences in academic classes. We hope that teachers find examples in this guide that they can adapt to their own classes.

We drew most of the examples from middle school and high school service-learning because that is where most of the Maryland school districts are satisfying the graduation requirement. However, the best practices are adaptable to different grade levels, developmental levels, and circumstances.

Service-Learning Evaluation

Answer the following questions about your service-learning practice. Mark the box which most accurately describes your program. Evaluate only one service-learning program at a time. (i.e., do not try to evaluate your peer-tutoring and environmental project together.) Feel free to make notes in the margins about exactly what you do. Completing this self-evaluation will help you decide how the *Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning* can best meet your needs. Take the time to delve into the strengths and weaknesses of your service-learning.

I. Are students meeting a need in the community?

☐ **No**

☐ **Yes, students . . .**

- ☐ Provide short-term assistance addressing a community need.
- ☐ Provide ongoing assistance addressing a community need.
- ☐ Work toward a lasting solution to a community problem.

Answer the following questions:

Who determined the need?
How could you and your students tell that the need was met?
How essential was it to the community that the problem was addressed?

II. Are you meeting curricular objectives through service-learning?

☐ **No**

☐ **Yes, I . . .**

- ☐ Incorporate service-learning into a unit.
- ☐ Use service-learning to unify the teaching of content and skills throughout the year.
- ☐ Teach content and/or skills in different disciplines using service-learning throughout the year.

Answer the following questions:

What skills are students learning through service-learning?
What curricular content are students learning through service-learning?

III. Are students reflecting throughout service-learning?

☐ **No**

☐ **Yes, . . .**

- ☐ At the end of the experience, students contemplate their service-learning experience and receive a response.
- ☐ Throughout the process, students contemplate their service-learning experience and receive a response.

Answer the following questions:

Who gives students a response as they reflect? Their peers? The teacher?
When do students reflect?
How is the reflection structured to get the most meaningful response and discussion possible?

IV. Are you developing student responsibility?

☐ **No**

☐ **Yes, I . . .**

- ☐ Establish choices for students in how they carry out the service-learning I select and organize.
- ☐ Share responsibility with students for service-learning development and implementation.
- ☐ Facilitate student development, coordination, and implementation of service-learning.

Answer the following questions:

How often do students work together in service-learning?
What percent of service-learning is teacher-driven vs. student-driven?
Who plans and organizes the service-learning?

V. Are you establishing community partnerships?

☐ **No**

☐ **Yes, I . . .**

- ☐ Consult with a community partner for information and resources relevant to the issue service-learning addresses.
- ☐ Create opportunities for students to interact with community partners.
- ☐ Collaborate with students and community partners as an action team to plan and implement service-learning.

VI. Are you planning for service-learning?

☐ **No**

☐ **Yes, I . . .**

- ☐ Plan service-learning ahead of time without input from others.
- ☐ Collaborate with colleagues, students, and others to plan service-learning.

Answer the following questions:
Who is involved in the planning process?
How far in advance do you plan?

VII. Are you preparing students for the service experience?

☐ **No**

☐ **Yes, I . . .**

- ☐ Equip students with knowledge and skills at the beginning of the experience.
- ☐ Equip students with knowledge and skills as needs arise or as the project changes.

Answer the following questions:
What do students need to know to serve successfully?
Do their needs change as the service-learning progresses? How?

Look back at your answers to the seven questions and the italicized sub-questions.

What are the strengths of your service-learning?

1.
2.
3.

What areas have the most room for improvement?

1.
2.
3.

What issue would you like to work on first?

1.

These seven sets of questions correspond to the seven best practices. Once you have chosen an issue on which to work, you will find relevant information and teacher examples with the correlating best practice.

The Maryland School-Based Service-Learning Best Practices

1. **Meet a Recognized Need in the Community**
   - Approach 1: Provide short-term assistance addressing a community need
   - Approach 2: Provide ongoing assistance addressing a community need
   - Approach 3: Work toward a lasting solution to a community problem

2. **Achieve Curricular Objectives through Service-Learning**
   - Approach 1: Incorporate service-learning into a unit
   - Approach 2: Use service-learning to unify the teaching of content and skills throughout the year
   - Approach 3: Teach content and/or skills in different disciplines using service-learning throughout the year

3. **Reflect throughout Service-Learning Experience**
   - Approach 1: At the end of the experience, students contemplate their service-learning experience and receive response
   - Approach 2: Throughout the process, students contemplate their service-learning experience and receive response

4. **Develop Student Responsibility**
   - Approach 1: Establish choices for students in how they implement the teacher-planned service-learning
   - Approach 2: Share responsibility with students for service-learning development and implementation
   - Approach 3: Facilitate student definition, coordination, and implementation of service-learning

5. **Establish Community Partnerships**
   - Approach 1: A teacher consults with community partner for information and resources
   - Approach 2: Students interact with community partners
   - Approach 3: Students, teachers, and community partners collaborate as an action team

6. **Plan Ahead for Service-Learning**
   - Approach 1: Plan service-learning independently
   - Approach 2: Collaborate with colleagues, students, and others to plan service-learning

7. **Equip Students with Knowledge and Skills Needed for Service**
   - Approach 1: Equip students with knowledge and skills at the beginning of the experience
   - Approach 2: Equip students with knowledge and skills as needs arise or as the project changes

Subject Areas and Issues Addressed in Maryland's Best Practices

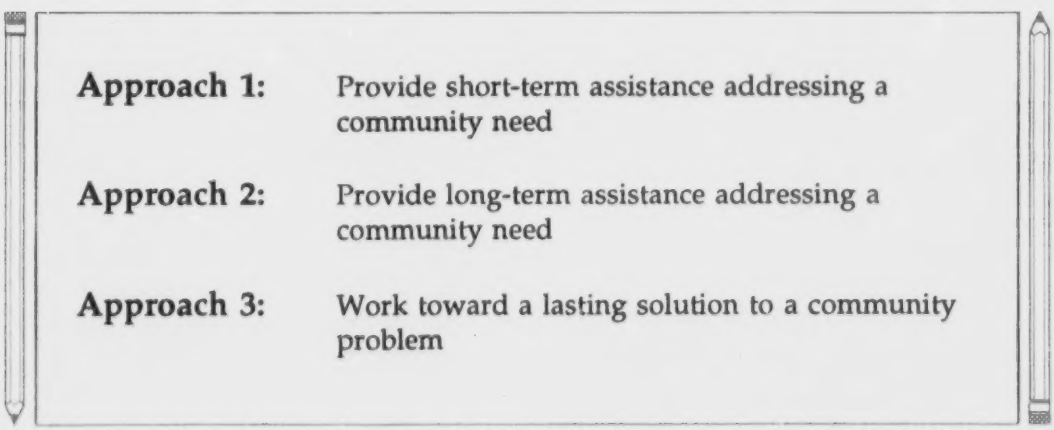
	Elementary	English	Home Econ.	Journalism	Science	Social Studies	Interdisc.	Special Educ.
children		p. 32	p. 57					
elderly	p. 21					p. 54	p. 23	
environment					p. 13 & p. 42		p. 51	
health				p. 15				
historic preservation						p. 37		
homelessness	p. 11		p. 49					
poverty			p. 44					
safety						p. 46		
school					p. 19	p. 27		p. 35
other		p. 39				p. 30		

Best Practice 1:

Meet a Recognized Need in the Community

In the best service-learning, students are responsive to their communities. The community may be small – the school, for example. Or it may be larger -- the city, the state, or the country. In all situations, service-learning has the power to address real problems. This calls for some research and courage to tackle difficult issues, but success is even more meaningful when students address real needs in the community.

Teachers and students may also define the need narrowly or broadly. Thus, students can address the obvious manifestations of a need, such as food and clothing, or the root causes of a problem.



Approach 1:	Provide short-term assistance addressing a community need
Approach 2:	Provide long-term assistance addressing a community need
Approach 3:	Work toward a lasting solution to a community problem

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Approach #1:

Provide short-term assistance addressing a community need

Benefits: Logistics are relatively easy to coordinate in short-term service-learning. The service may disrupt the class schedule, but only briefly. Short-term service-learning can generate excitement because of the "event" nature of the service and the novelty of the experience for students and teachers.

Example:

Teacher:	*Tanya Clark and Gloria Bryant*
Subject:	*Language Arts and Reading*
Grade:	*1st*
School:	*Dr. Bernard Harris Elementary*
County:	*Baltimore City*
Issue:	*Homelessness*

Situation:

Tanya and Gloria wanted to involve their students in service-learning for homeless children that was linked to the curriculum. They called Bea Gaddy, a homeless advocate who runs a shelter in Baltimore City, and learned that the homeless children needed new underwear and toiletries. In February, 1990, Tanya and Gloria developed a program called "Pennies of Love" to meet the need.

Approach:

To raise money to buy the underwear and toiletries, all the first graders at Dr. Bernard Harris Elementary School collected pledges of a penny for each page they read. Over a month they made more than $300. Teachers took a group of first graders to buy the underwear and toiletries. Then all of the students decorated bags for the items. Bea Gaddy came to the school, and the students presented the bags to her to take back to the homeless children.

Result:

The service-learning provided a one-time opportunity to address a community need by providing new underwear and toiletries for homeless children. As a result of their service-learning, students learned reading, language arts, math, and art skills while they helped their community. For example, they counted the pennies in class, addressing some of their math objectives.

The teachers learned to let students take more responsibility for activities in the classroom. When the students wanted to publicize "Pennies of Love," they decided to make posters and write letters to their parents. Gloria says that she became more of a guide to her first graders, while they came up with the ideas and did the work.

Just because you say it's a need, doesn't mean it is . . .

How to identify a community need:

- Talk to people in the community
- Watch the news to compile information
- Convene an advisory group
- Conduct surveys of community leaders and service organizations

Approach #2:

Provide ongoing assistance addressing a community need

Benefits: Because the service is continuous, students may develop relationships with those they serve or with community partners. Students have opportunities to practice and refine skills in the service setting.

Example:

Teacher:	*Doreen Kok*
Subject:	*Science*
Grade:	*7th*
School:	*Arundel Middle School*
County:	*Anne Arundel*
Issue:	*Environment*

Situation:

Doreen and her students identified two community needs. One was that the area around the stream behind the school was neglected and full of litter, fouling the water that ran into the Patuxent River and the Chesapeake Bay. The other community need was that the school needed alternative settings to engage students in experiential education. Doreen decided to meet both needs by revitalizing the stream area and building an outdoor classroom for students to study and improve the environment.

Approach:

Doreen received a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to revitalize the stream area. She bought wood for bird and bat houses, plants to control erosion, mulch for trails, and water-testing kits. She received matching donations from the community.

The students worked on the stream revitalization all year. In class they concentrated on the service-learning once a week, and their activities included experiments on water quality and habitat

diversity. Students also developed action plans for individual projects. They conducted pollution-control experiments, studied plant and wildlife in the area, and constructed bird houses and feeders. On weekends in the fall, students, parents, and teachers worked together to pick up trash, lay out trails, build benches, and plant shrubs.

To help improve the environment in the years to come, the students developed an education program for children at the elementary school. They made coloring books to teach children to respect and preserve the natural world. Students also supplied water quality data to the Department of Planning and Zoning's Stream Water Project.

To give other students a setting to learn about the environment, the science class created an outdoor classroom by clearing and mulching an area above the stream and building benches.

Result:

The students' efforts have revitalized the stream area. Building the houses and feeders attracted more wildlife. The Stream Water Project used student data on water quality to evaluate future environmental policy. Students used the data they collected on animal and plant life in the area as a benchmark for further efforts to rehabilitate the stream.

Students, teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members were proud of students' efforts to preserve their environment. Doreen believes that these students will take more responsibility for public land and become better citizens. On a daily basis, these students learned more science. One student, inspired by the sense of achievement she gained building the outdoor classroom, researched owls, investigated a regurgitated owl pellet, and built an owl house. According to Doreen, "My students learned much more doing Towser's Branch work than they learned from any science textbook, lab, or curriculum."

Approach #3:

Work toward a lasting solution to a community problem

Benefits: Students analyze root causes of a problem and break off a piece of the problem to address. Students can make a positive, long-term contribution to their community.

Example:

Teacher:	*Jim O'Toole*
Subject:	*Journalism*
Grade:	*10th -12th*
School:	*Fallston High School*
County:	*Harford*
Issue:	*Secondhand smoke*

Situation:

Jim's journalism class read dozens of articles on various social issues during the year, but none of them moved the students to action. Near the end of the year, the students read an article from *Reader's Digest* on the serious health dangers posed by secondhand smoke. The students organized a campaign against secondhand smoke in Harford County schools.

Approach:

First, students developed a plan to investigate the school's ventilation system. They contacted the central office and spoke to those in charge of the physical plant. Students discovered that because of the school's design, the students were breathing smoke that came from the staff smoking rooms.

Second, students gathered more information about the dangers of secondhand smoke. They contacted federal organizations like the Centers for Disease Control and the Surgeon General's office.

After learning about this problem in their school community, the students developed a solution -- to prohibit all smoking in the school building. They first made a presentation to the Harford

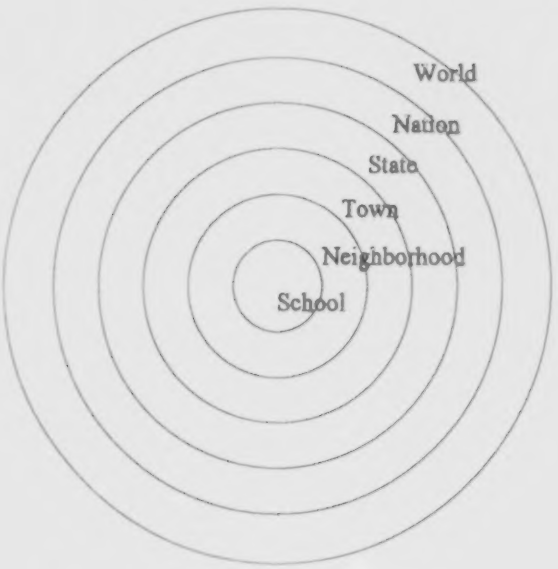
County School Board. When the board said it had no authority over negotiated agreements with unions representing teachers and school support staff, the students developed an alternative strategy. They contacted the media and received a great deal of attention. They then contacted the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools, asking to make a presentation. The students also contacted their state and local legislators and invited them to a round table discussion where students made their arguments in greater detail. Later, they contacted the various school employees' unions to get their support for a measure to ban smoking in the schools. After success in the schools, the students appealed to the Maryland Association of Athletics to ban smoking at athletic events on school grounds.

Jim's journalism students began working on this issue when they were in tenth grade and continued their efforts over the next summer. Many of them took Jim's mid-level journalism course the following year and continued to pursue the issue. Even students who did not elect to take journalism again continued to work on the campaign. Over the years, new students joined the journalism classes. Some of them supported the ban on secondhand smoke and some did not. Jim encouraged the ones who did not join the campaign to get involved in service-learning in other areas of the community.

Result:

Students succeeded in banning smoking from all school buildings and grounds in the county. The ban was ultimately extended to the entire state, and Jim believes that his students influenced that decision. Students also learned many skills, such as written and oral communication, time management, and leadership. These students served as models for other students who now believe that they can make a difference in a democracy because of the experiences of their peers.

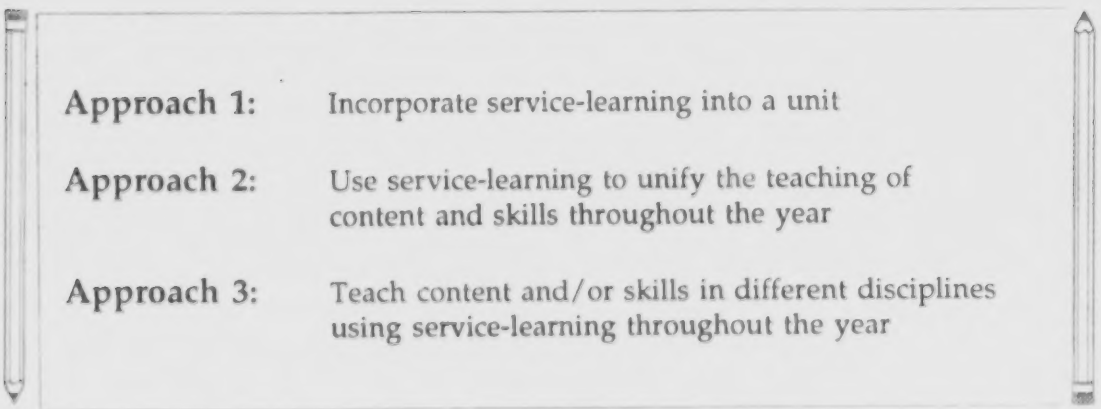
How Do You Define Community? It can be the. . .



Best Practice 2:

Achieve Curricular Objectives Through Service-Learning

If service-learning is another thing to add to an already overcrowded curriculum and schedule, then forget it. However, many teachers across Maryland have found that service-learning adds relevancy and purpose to their curricular objectives. Their students are solving real community problems, working together, and applying their new skills and knowledge. There are many ways to incorporate service-learning into a course. The approaches below move from service-learning infused into one unit to service-learning as the unifying force for many different concepts and disciplines.



Approach 1: Incorporate service-learning into a unit

Approach 2: Use service-learning to unify the teaching of content and skills throughout the year

Approach 3: Teach content and/or skills in different disciplines using service-learning throughout the year

Approach #1:

Incorporate service-learning into a unit

Benefits: Students immediately see the relevancy of school to life. Service-learning reinforces concepts and skills taught in class.

Example:

Teacher:	*Ginny Fair*
Subject:	*Biology*
Grade:	*10th*
School:	*North Carroll High School*
County:	*Carroll*
Issue:	*Vandalism and School Beautification*

Situation:

A few years ago vandalism became a problem on Ginny's campus. Most disturbing was that students chopped down trees that families planted as memorials to their children who had died while attending the school. Ginny realized that the school needed a way to curb the vandalism and regain the support of the community; she decided that she could achieve her botany objectives simultaneously.

Approach:

Ginny used service-learning to teach her botany unit. Some of her objectives were to teach students about the importance of roots, leaves, and other plant organs to plant survival; the ecology of their own environment; and the effect of plants on the environment. Students landscaped the school grounds and replaced the memorial trees. Because the school has a four-period day with 90-minute periods, Ginny structured the program in the following way:

WEEK ONE

Ginny introduced the need their service-learning would address. Each student then chose a plant to study and interviewed the

agriculture teacher and the nursery staff to learn about its soil, light, water, and nutrient needs. Students checked drainage of the land around the school, surveyed the plot to be landscaped, and used meters to measure how much sunlight that area received. Then students made scale drawings of the plot.

WEEK TWO

After preparing the soil with fertilizer, students marked the spot for each plant. The next day, they planted the trees and larger shrubs, with the assistance of the nursery staff or a parent. Then the students planted the small shrubs and flowers and mulched the entire area. At the end of the week, students evaluated their work and their science skills, while reflecting on their impact on the school and community.

FOLLOW UP

Two weeks later, students took a tour of their landscaping to examine what was thriving and what was not, reinforcing the lesson about factors affecting plant growth. Students checked on their plants regularly, revisiting the botany unit.

LOGISTICS

- Ginny found her school's "bush budget" of $1500/year, which is to fund beautification of the grounds. No one spent this money, so Ginny easily gained permission to buy plants and trees.
- Ginny pre-ordered many plants, which the nursery held for the class. However, she still had flexibility to change the order until the delivery day depending on student landscaping choices.
- The head custodian at the school provided shovels, rakes, and other materials for the students.

Result:

Vandalism at North Carroll High School decreased dramatically, which Ginny attributes to the time and effort students devoted to the appearance of the school grounds. One mother, who visited the trees when she wanted to feel close to her two dead sons, thanked Ginny for restoring the memorial. Students also saw the relevance of the botany objectives because they immediately put their knowledge into practice and were commended by the school community. By working closely with the nursery staff and the head of the agriculture department students made contacts that might influence their career choices.

Approach #2:

Use service-learning to unify the teaching of content and skills throughout the year

Benefits: Students discover that many different skills and concepts they learn throughout the year are useful outside of the classroom because the skills are applied in service-learning.

Example:

Teacher:	*Judy O'Connell*
Subjects:	*All*
Grade:	*3rd*
School:	*Hebbville Elementary*
County:	*Baltimore County*
Issue:	*Senior Citizens*

Situation:

Because the third grade Maryland State Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) tasks focus on reading skills, Judy decided to improve her students' literacy with service-learning. She thought that partnering with a nursing home would serve both the students' and seniors' needs.

Approach:

Judy and her students visited the nursing home for an hour every other Thursday from October through June. Judy taught the students many skills throughout the program. To improve their literacy, students read Big Books with the senior citizens. The larger words and pictures made it easier for seniors to participate in the activity with the children. Often students and residents took turns reading and talking about the story. This improved the third graders' communication skills.

The students also shared written work with the seniors. For example, students wrote an essay about the importance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in their lives, corrected all of their

mistakes, and read and discussed their essays with a senior. This reinforced what the students had learned because they taught the information to the seniors.

Judy taught science and math with information from service-learning as well. During their unit on space, students wrote postcards to the residents as if they were on Mars. They also calculated the seniors' weights on different planets. Students used their math skills to decide how many supplies they needed for the nursing home visits. They decided how much tea, cookies, and napkins to buy while creating a budget based on costs. When students learned about distances, they gathered data about their trip to the nursing home, including the odometer reading on the bus and the length of the trip. They manipulated the numbers to find out the distance traveled in seven trips, the time that each visit took round trip, and other relevant facts.

Result:

Judy saw students connecting what they learned to real life situations. They also had an audience for their work; they saw a reason to perfect their work for their senior citizens. "The excitement generated by the project motivated even the poorest reader to share a book with an elderly friend," says Judy.

Judy saw her students writing better because they had an appreciative audience that was always eager to read more student writing. She thinks that it is a wonderful opportunity for children to give back to the community.

Benefits of direct service:

Students Learn:

- ★ To be responsible for their own actions
- ★ To be dependable
- ★ To make a difference in another person's life
- ★ To solve problems
- ★ To care for another person
- ★ To focus on the needs of others, and put their own problems in context
- ★ To get along with people different from themselves

Approach #3:

Teach content and/or skills in different disciplines using service-learning throughout the year

Benefits: Service-learning allows students to apply what they learn in different subject areas to one service-learning effort throughout the year.

Example:

Teacher:	*Kathy Fowler, Debbie Julian, Gayle Ross, Marci Thoma*
Subject:	*Math, Reading/Language Arts, Science, Social Studies*
Grade:	*6th*
School:	*Stevensville Middle School*
County:	*Queen Anne's*
Issue:	*Senior Citizens*

Situation:

Because they are in a team structure, teachers at Stevensville decided to work together, creating an interdisciplinary service-learning approach. To make service-learning easier to implement, three members of the team wrote a curriculum that infused service-learning into all areas of study and concentrated on senior citizens. They examined each discipline's learning objectives and designed service-learning activities that fulfilled those objectives.

Approach:

The service-learning direct action took place in the reading and civics classes; indirect action occurred in math and language arts; and all disciplines participated in preparation and reflection.

READING: Students learned many important skills and information about the elderly in reading. At the beginning of the year, students spent six days learning and practicing various communication skills needed when they met the seniors. They learned about obstacles to communication, how to avoid "killer"

statements, and how to become active listeners. In October a speaker from the Department of Aging spoke to the students. They also read "Chino's Tale" in November and discussed the feelings and problems of senior citizens. In January students read "The Wise Old Woman," and discussed how seniors contribute to society. With this background knowledge, students organized outreach to senior citizens. Every month one of the reading classes hosted a party for seniors from a nearby senior center; students also invited their grandparents and elderly neighbors to ensure an even number of seniors and students.

SOCIAL SCIENCE: In social science, students prepared in a more general way for the concept of serving and citizenship. At the beginning of the year students discussed service-learning and citizenship, watched the video *Today's Heroes*, and learned how to locate newsworthy articles about service. In October a panel of speakers (a senior citizen employment counselor, physical therapist, nutritionist, and community liaison person) shared information with the students about services for seniors and careers working with seniors. Students also filled out a chart on different careers.

Additionally, social science used the elderly as resources for their study of recent history. In March, students brainstormed important events in the last 70 years, discussed oral history, and wrote questions with which to interview senior citizens. After interviewing a senior, students contrasted their own lives with that of the person they interviewed. In April seniors came to class to discuss their experiences.

SCIENCE: Students learned about the physical aspects of growing old in science. A doctor spoke to the students about the mental and physical changes that occur as people age. Students also completed a lab on the physical problems experienced by some senior citizens, such as blurred vision, hearing loss, and loss of mobility.

LANGUAGE ARTS: In December after reviewing the structure of haiku and cinquin poems, students wrote, edited, and assembled holiday cards in the computer lab for local seniors. Students repeated the process for Valentine's Day.

MATH: In September students made posters for the senior center craft bazaar using geometric shapes they had studied. They also surveyed their parents, asking them if and where they volunteer. Students tabulated the statistical data from the

survey, calculating the mean, the mode, the range and the median. Then the students graphed the statistical results of the survey and displayed their findings to the school.

Result:

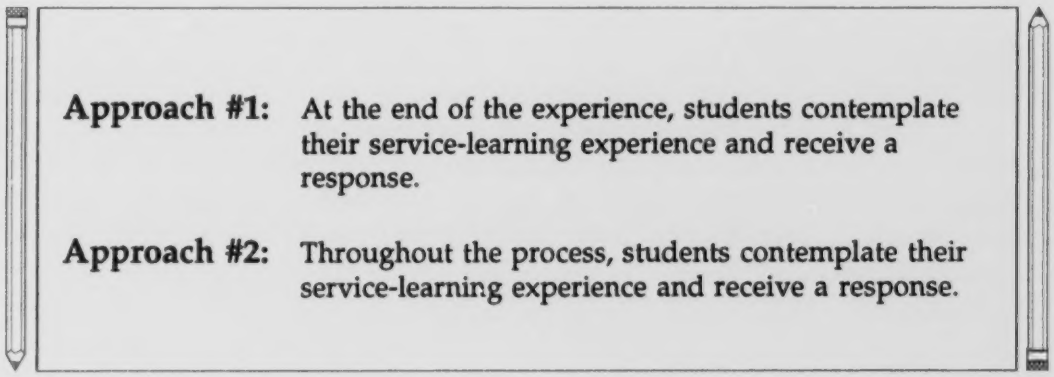
Service-learning unified the entire sixth grade curriculum. The information and skills learned in one class became applicable throughout the school day and in their service. Teachers found that service-learning helped prepare their students for the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program. Routine activities like learning the structure of a poem or facts about World War II became exciting because students had a chance to use the knowledge as they interacted with the seniors.

According to Kathy, "Everyone has existing lesson plans because you have taught the skills and content. Now you are just incorporating information from service-learning. This has made teaching come alive for all of us. It has provided the opportunity to work together as a team and we enjoy it. There are lots of pluses."

Best Practice 3:

Reflect Throughout Service-Learning

Plato said, "The life which is unexamined is not worth living." We know enough about human nature, learning, and psychology to know that people need to process, debrief, think, and talk about what they do to learn and grow. Through open-ended dialogues about their service -- discussing the what, why, to whom, and to what end -- students grow intellectually, personally, and socially. The more opportunities for reflection and response, the better.



Approach #1: At the end of the experience, students contemplate their service-learning experience and receive a response.

Approach #2: Throughout the process, students contemplate their service-learning experience and receive a response.

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Approach # 1:

At the end of the experience, students contemplate their service-learning and receive a response.

Benefits: Students think about their service experiences and receive reactions, allowing them to gain a new perspective on their experience and to think more deeply about their service and the issue addressed.

Example:

Teacher:	*Shelley Finkelstein*
Subject:	*Social Studies*
Grade:	*9th*
School:	*South River High School*
County:	*Anne Arundel*
Issue:	*Varied, including school improvement*

Situation:

As part of a service-learning field day, students planted trees on the school grounds, created an outdoor classroom, painted a mural, and carried out other activities to beautify the school and encourage good citizenship. The students were new to service-learning and many had a bad attitude about the requirement, so Shelley felt that spending a generous amount of time on reflection was important.

Approach:

Shelley devoted six class periods to reflection, almost 30% of the service-learning time. Her class worked on a variety of reflection activities after the service-learning field day, including:

Writing:

- Evaluation Essay: To prepare for the essay, students completed a form to evaluate their service-learning. The

form included 17 short-answer questions such as:

- ❖ What was the greatest difficulty you encountered?
- ❖ How well did the students work together?
- ❖ How well did you understand the purpose of this activity?

Students worked on the form individually, and then they used the form as an outline for a five-paragraph essay on the service-learning. They wrote about what went poorly and what went well.

- ▲ Reflection Essay: Students chose three words that best described their service-learning experience and wrote an essay around them.

- ▲ Letters: Students wrote letters to the eighth graders describing service-learning and wrote thank-you notes to all those who helped them with the field day.

- ▲ Response: Students received a written response from Shelley on the content of their papers.

Large Group Discussion:

- ■ Brainstorming Activity: Students brainstormed before writing their letter to the eighth graders.

- ■ Interview: Students spent a class period answering a reporter's questions about their service-learning field day.

- ■ Celebration: Students watched the video and the slide show they made of the field day.

- ■ Response: Students received responses from Shelley and their peers in these discussions.

Small Group Work:

- ● Pairs: Students got into pairs the day after the field day to discuss their experiences. They also worked in pairs to generate ideas for their reflection essay.

- ● Committee Work: A small group of students got together after school to create the slide show and put it to music for the ninth graders.

- Response: Students received feedback on their ideas from their peers as they worked together.

Result:

The reflection made the service into a learning experience. Without these opportunities to write and discuss what they did, Shelley believes the ninth graders would have looked back on the service-learning field day as just a nice day out of class.

In their essays, the students made clear the benefits of service-learning. They observed how much they enjoyed working with others they didn't know; how they appreciated everyone's hard work; and how they enjoyed seeing their teachers in a different light. Students felt a sense of teamwork with their peers and their teachers. They took pride in having improved the appearance of the school and said that they wanted to help next year's ninth graders with their service-learning. Comments such as these from the essays gave Shelley something with which to measure the success of the service-learning.

Student Input on Prompts

Ideas for prompts can also come from the students. Amy Hudock has an *anxiety box* in her sixth grade class. Students write down something they are worried about and put it in the anxiety box. Amy either addresses the issue privately with the student or with the class if the student remained anonymous. These issues make excellent discussions and writing prompts.

Approach #2:

Throughout the process, students contemplate their service-learning experience and receive a response.

Benefits: By contemplating what they are learning continuously, students learn more about their experience. They move from summarizing to analyzing and evaluating their experience.

Example:

This teacher emphasizes oral communication as a mode of reflection.

Teacher:	*Beverly Durham*
Subject:	*Service-Learning Class*
Grade:	*11th & 12th*
School:	*Wicomico High School*
County:	*Wicomico*
Issue:	*Various, including disabilities*

Situation:

Beverly realized that students needed time to stop and learn what their preparation and action meant to them. She used small and large group discussions to encourage students to synthesize their experience and reach conclusions about the value of their service. The service-learning class she taught emphasized the topics of understanding aging, disabilities, health care, and the environment.

Approach:

Students talked in pairs and in a large group about their service and what they learned. Students responded to one another and the teacher responded as well. Initially, students restated their experience. As the year went on, they started to make judgments and analyze the experience.

Reflection took place before the action and after. Students got a

chance to discuss what to look for before they got to the service site. For example, before going to work at a rehabilitation center, they discussed what people with disabilities contribute to society and what responsibility society has to those with disabilities.

After the students visited their service site, they contemplated the missions of the various agencies and recommendations they would make to the agencies.

Ground rules which made small or large group discussions work as a method of reflection were that:

A. students respected and listened to one another's opinions,
B. the teacher *facilitated* discussion by asking hard questions that helped students reach their own conclusions, and
C. all students had a chance to share.

Result:

Beverly achieved many Maryland State Department of Education Social Studies goals through her service-learning course. Some of the objectives that the students attained through reflection were thinking critically, solving problems, and making rational decisions.

Group reflection and peer response led to the growth of a community in Beverly's classroom. Students respected and listened to one another. The teacher became a facilitator, a member of the group. Beverly's students moved beyond relating the facts of their experience to analyzing and evaluating.

Summary Reflection vs. Contemplative Reflection

- *Summary (adj.)* accomplished or performed too quickly, with inadequate consideration, preparation, or space allotted.
- *Contemplative (adj.)* viewed with sustained attention: gazed at thoughtfully for a noticeable time.

Example:

This teacher emphasizes written communication as reflection

Teacher:	*Joey Hoffman*
Subject:	*Service-Learning Class*
Grade:	*11th & 12th*
School:	*Middletown High School*
County:	*Frederick*
Issue:	*Tutoring*

Situation:

Eighty students tutored through Joey's service-learning class. Because she saw them once a week, Joey thought that establishing an effective communication system was important. She decided to have her students keep journals as a way for her to work with each of them.

Approach:

To have students reflect frequently on their experience as tutors, Joey required them to write in their journals twice a week. Students wrote about the skills and strategies they used and the child they worked with. Joey responded every other week.

Joey's responses encouraged more thoughtful entries. "At the beginning of the year, I often wrote more than they did," she said. She used the journals as a place to ask questions, encourage the students, and praise them. It was a great opportunity to share strategies that had worked for her. After a while, students wrote longer and better responses because the journal became a way of writing letters to Joey and having her write back. Students wrote to fill her in on their activities and emotions. Their responses often started with phrases such as, "I wish you'd been here yesterday."

Besides the written responses from Joey, students reflected on their own journal entries and shared them with peers. In class, Joey used the journals to draw students' attention to their own growth. She had them look at their first entries and compare them to recent ones. She also had students look back at the journals for inspiring tutoring experiences to share with the class.

Result:

Both the students and Joey used the journals to evaluate the effectiveness of the tutoring experience and the growth and learning of the tutors. One important outgrowth of the journals was an improvement in the relationship between Joey and her students. They became members of a team, working together and helping their community.

Journal and Discussion Prompts

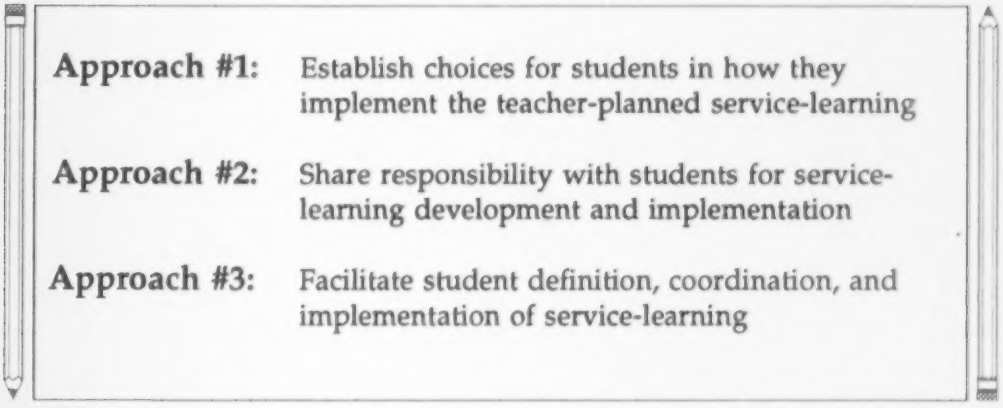
- What did you do?
- What did you learn?
- How does the service experience connect with what you have learned in school?
- Who benefitted from the service you provided?
- What would you change next time?
- Brainstorm solutions to problems encountered during the service.
- What were your first impressions at the service site?
- What was your best experience?
- What was your worst experience?
- Describe a friendship that developed through the service.
- What tips would you give to other students doing service?

Best Practice 4:

Develop Student Responsibility

Students are most eager to participate in service-learning when they have some say in what happens, how it happens, when it happens, and what role they will play. The teacher's challenge is to create a climate that encourages students to take risks and responsibility.

The third approach below gives the most responsibility to the students for both creating and carrying out the service-learning. However, teachers need to be aware of the developmental levels of their students and their own willingness to move from leader to facilitator in the classroom. The more students and teachers share responsibilities, the richer the experience is for all.



Approach #1: Establish choices for students in how they implement the teacher-planned service-learning

Approach #2: Share responsibility with students for service-learning development and implementation

Approach #3: Facilitate student definition, coordination, and implementation of service-learning

Approach #1:

Establish choices for students in how they implement the teacher-planned service-learning

Benefits: Although the teacher organizes the project, students still decide the roles they play.

Example:

Teacher:	*Pat Barget*
Subject:	*Special Education*
Age:	*12-17 years*
School:	*Cockeysville Middle School*
County:	*Baltimore County*
Issue:	*Environment*

Situation:

Pat had a class of nine Outreach students (students whose cognitive developmental abilities were at or below the first grade level). She knew that the students enjoyed making choices about their activities, but they needed to have a list of options presented to them. Pat and the students saw that the school's courtyard was overgrown and dull, and she established different roles from which the students chose.

Approach:

The first job was to clean the courtyard. Each student decided to weed, sweep, prune, or clear trash. Then, students chose to plant flowers, shrubs, or trees. Students also learned to select the correct tools and materials for the different jobs. They were responsible for assembling the tools and materials and putting them away. Once the courtyard was cleared and planted, students planned how to decorate it for each season. They decided when it was time to get out and weed or clean again.

Result:

The Outreach students were proud of their accomplishments and had a greater sense of belonging and contributing to the school community. They received thank-you notes from fellow students who appreciated the improvement in the courtyard. The service-learning also created an opportunity for special education students to work closely with the rest of the school. The general education students approached the Outreach class to join in their efforts. As the initiators of the service-learning, Pat's students learned to take responsibility and organize their work.

Approach #2:

Share responsibility with students for service-learning development and implementation.

Benefits: By working together, students learn organization, communication, and decision-making skills.

Example:

Teacher:	*Katherine Potocki*
Subject:	*Social Studies*
Grade:	*8th*
School:	*Patapsco Middle School*
County:	*Howard*
Issue:	*Historic Preservation*

Situation:

About five years ago, developers in Howard County tried to bulldoze a historic 19th century cemetery to build houses on the land. Katherine's students brought the situation to her attention. With her students, Katherine began a multi-year initiative to protect and restore the historic cemeteries. There was so much to be done that she started to break tasks into pieces for which student groups took responsibility. The students successfully completed their tasks as long as she was there as a resource and facilitator.

Approach:

Students Chose Their Own Groups: After announcing the various tasks related to the historic cemetery preservation program, Katherine allowed the students to choose their own groups. Students usually worked in only one group at a time. Sometimes students had to improve their behavior before Katherine allowed them to take on high-visibility positions. For example, Katherine didn't want a disruptive student to present testimony to the state legislature without modifying his behavior.

Group Responsibilities: The student groups took on a variety of responsibilities throughout the year. For example, the following six groups worked together for two months:

1. 10 students worked on legislation at the county level as the Howard County Student Advisory Board.
2. 10 students wrote testimony to present to the state legislature.
3. 12 students refurbished the cemetery photo-documents.
4. 20 students planned the next field trip to the cemetery.
5. 40 students coordinated car pools to the Howard County Historical Society for students to conduct primary document research.
6. 15 students organized peers, parents, and equipment for a Saturday devoted to cleaning up the cemetery.

Supervising the Groups: Katherine structured her class so students could work independently on Fridays. Student groups conferred with her during that time. Katherine kept all of her service-learning materials available to students in her classroom, so that if they finished a class activity early, they could work on their service-learning group work. Katherine also met with student groups during lunch.

Result:

Katherine's students learned to be more responsible and accomplish difficult tasks in a group through their involvement in preserving the historic cemetery.

In addition, they learned both skills and information they needed for social studies through their service. The eighth grade learning objectives include interpretation of historical documents, understanding of political systems in the United States, and an understanding of the way individuals can influence political change in our local, state, and national governments. The work that students did researching the people buried in the cemetery and advocating for the preservation of the historic site helped them meet those objectives.

Katherine says, "I tend to be a rigid person. I wouldn't have done it this way if there were any other way. Out of desperation I would give them jobs that I thought were too big for them, and they would do very well. The students had a real feeling of ownership. You see them blossom. These kids were not the same in June as they were in September. They felt empowered. (Using student groups) is a whole lot easier than you think."

Approach #3:

Facilitate student definition, coordination, and implementation of service-learning.

Benefits: Students choose their service-learning, plan it, and take responsibility for logistics as well as the service; students all have a role and are accountable to one another.

Example:

Teacher:	*Mary Ann Hartshorn*
Subject:	*Language Arts*
Grade:	*7th*
School:	*Southampton Middle School*
County:	*Harford*
Issue:	*Veterans*

Situation:

Mary Ann's philosophy is that students get more out of any experience if they have responsibility for it. Therefore, it was natural for her to allow students to do the planning while she acted as a resource.

Approach:

The interdisciplinary seventh grade team presented many service-learning opportunities to the students. Students ranked the choices, and the teachers gave most students their first choice. Mary Ann sponsored a group that chose to do service for the veterans at Perry Point Veterans Hospital. The veterans did not have many visitors and were very lonely. Mary Ann outlined how much time was available for the preparation and service and let the students define the actual project.

To structure student decision-making, Mary Ann split students into groups of four to brainstorm ways to address the veterans' needs. Then, as a class, they generated about 50 ideas. The class pared down the list to activities that fit their time frame. Together they decided to produce a play (*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*),

create a slide show, take pictures of the residents with the Grinch, and distribute cards and candy trains to the patients.

Students then chose the piece of the project on which they would work. The groups who wrote and produced the play and slide show had self-appointed leaders, while the other project participants worked together without a leader.

The students worked on the veteran's project each day for two weeks during their 50-minute academic enrichment period. The play and the slide show gave students a chance to practice their language arts skills of dramatic presentation, oral communication, and written communication.

At the beginning of every day during the service-learning, each committee reported to the class, and Mary Ann reminded them what they were doing and why. Then she floated from group to group providing guidance when requested. Mary Ann says, "I don't like chaos, but when I can see how excited they are about what they are doing, I feel good."

Result:

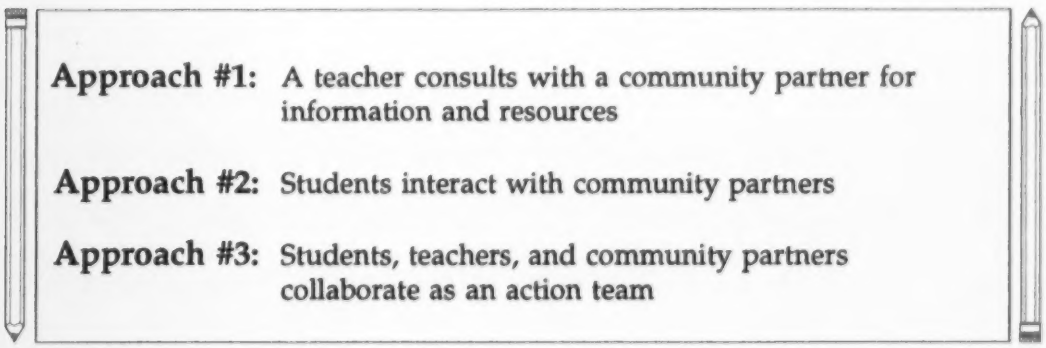
The veterans enjoyed the visit, stood in line to have their picture taken with the Grinch, and did not want the students to leave. The seventh graders put a great deal of energy and creativity into the service-learning because they had created the activities. Mary Ann watched the students accomplish more than she expected and more than she would have assigned. Through the project, the students also became aware of people in need in their community and how simple it was to do something to help. "The students loved the experience and want to go back."

Best Practice 5:

Establish Community Partnerships

Inviting community members to help design and participate in service-learning lends value to the activities and encourages students to get involved as part of a larger community effort. This act ensures that the service meets a genuine, identifiable need. The act of involving a community partner provides an "audience" for student learning and performance beyond the teacher, which significantly increases students' motivation and the quality of their work.

Establishing community partnerships benefits both the school and the community. Students have the opportunity to interact with adults in real world settings and situations. Working together, the school and community share resources and become stakeholders in each other's arenas.



Approach #1: A teacher consults with a community partner for information and resources

Approach #2: Students interact with community partners

Approach #3: Students, teachers, and community partners collaborate as an action team

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Approach #1:

A teacher consults with a community partner for information and resources.

Benefits: The community advisor's expertise and resources make it easier for the teacher to plan and implement service-learning.

Example:

Teacher:	*Michelle Thomas*
Subject:	*Science*
Grade:	*7th & 8th*
School:	*Greenwood Middle School*
County:	*Somerset*
Issue:	*Environment*

Situation:

Michelle was looking for some hands-on environmental education for her science classes. She had heard about the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) curriculum from a friend who had seen CBF present it at a conference.

Approach:

Michelle contacted the environmental specialist at the Maryland State Department of Education who gave her the 1-800 phone number to contact CBF. At her request, three trainers from CBF trained 18 teachers from Wicomico and Somerset counties for two full days. The money to cover the costs of substitutes came from CBF and the Chesapeake Bay Trust. During the training, teachers completed activities from the curriculum and reviewed their course objectives to see where the lessons would best fit.

Result:

The CBF curriculum clearly presented Michelle with environmental data, chances for students to generate data, and opportunities to tie service-learning into many different disciplines.

Using the curriculum, Michelle's students engaged in service-learning. They chose to clean up a drainage ditch near the school. The class planted grass and subaquatic vegetation, picked up trash around the ditch, and exhorted local trash authorities to pay special attention to that area. Now the water running from the ditch into the Manokin River is cleaner.

Three easy first steps to partner with the community:

1. Call the County Department of Human Services for statistics, such as the number of homeless in your city and county.

2. Call the librarian for books related to the issue of your service-learning.

3. Contact an education or lobbying group that specializes in the issue that interests you for information.

Approach #2:

Students interact with community partners.

Benefits: Students meet other adults and learn about their roles in the community. Students recognize the importance of their own efforts. The service that students provide is more visibly tied to a larger community effort.

Example:

Teacher:	*Lisa Schrodel*
Subject:	*Home Economics*
Grade:	*8th*
School:	*Sykesville Middle School*
County:	*Carroll*
Issue:	*Poverty*

Situation:

Lisa decided to focus on poverty for her service-learning. To find out more about families in crisis, Lisa contacted Human Services Programs of Carroll County, a private nonprofit that operates and administers the homeless shelter programs in the county.

Approach:

A speaker from Human Services spoke to Lisa's classes. She described the conditions that lead to families needing public assistance and what government and private agencies do for families in need in the Westminster area. The speaker also provided concrete details about welfare. By comparing the number of people who need help and receive it with the number of people who abuse the welfare system, she explained the myths and truths of welfare and the way Aid to Families with Dependent Children works. She described the conditions of public housing and the ways families in crisis get food, furniture, and other necessities. Finally, she let the students know how they could help by giving displaced families grooming items and silverware.

Result:

By working with Human Services, students developed informed opinions on poverty and welfare programs, better understood the impact that abuse has on families, and learned how they could help those in need. Students donated toiletries and silverware to families in Carroll County. Lisa reported that her students discussed their experience with parents and other community members because they had a new awareness of this controversial national social issue. As citizens, the students developed an understanding of how public money and people assist families in crisis.

Community partners for service-learning are everywhere!

Find them with the help of people around you.

Talk to . . .

- your students
- nonprofit agencies
- parents
- local government officials
- other teachers, administrators, or staff at your school

Approach # 3:

Students, teachers, and community partners collaborate as an action team.

Benefits: Community members and students develop relationships and respect for each other. The combination of the community partners' expertise and the students' energy results in greater service to the community.

Example:

Teacher:	*Charles Ridgell*
Subject:	*Civics*
Grade:	*9th*
School:	*Chopticon High School*
County:	*St. Mary's*
Issue:	*Varied, including fire prevention*

Situation:

Charles believes in teaching active citizenship. While he considered the preparation for the citizenship test in the first semester valuable, he wanted his students to practice the skills they had studied. Working with community partners on service-learning provided a perfect opportunity for students.

Approach:

Students in Charles' civics class researched community problems and worked in groups to develop action plans. Then, they found a community partner with whom to discuss their action plans. Charles required students to telephone or meet with one person who acted as their supervisor. The relationships between the students and the community partners began in February and continued through the end of the school year in June. Many students continued to work with their community partners during the summer and the following year.

Students found partners by using an resource list compiled by Charles and his colleagues. The list included national, state, and

local organizations with which students could work.

Last year, one student group concentrated on fire prevention. Eighteen students researched the issue at the local level. Their objective was to raise public awareness around fire prevention. They contacted a parent who worked at the fire department who put them in touch with other fire safety experts. The fire marshal informed the students and advised them as they put together their education campaign. Students then went door-to-door to encourage people to check their smoke detectors.

A survey of the ninth grade class revealed that many students did not have smoke detectors in their own homes. The fire prevention group asked for and received free smoke detectors to distribute from the local and state fire marshals.

Result:

The students learned and applied new leadership skills by working in small groups to address a real community need. Through their partnerships with community members, students gained a better understanding of the issue and learned how to work effectively with adults. The community members gained a new appreciation of the students as effective young citizens. "It was easy for us," Charles said. "Partnerships work."

Essential steps to build quality partnerships:

1. Find a contact person and a back up contact if you are working with an agency
2. Meet this person face-to-face to plan service
3. Involve the partners in planning and decision-making throughout the program
4. Discuss:
   a. Duration of partnership
   b. Frequency and length of visits
   c. Resources available
   d. Goals of service-learning
   e. How the partnership can meet the needs of both the school and community.
5. Maintain frequent contact with your partner

Best Practice 6:

Plan Ahead for Service-Learning

Engaging students in service-learning, especially for the first time, requires planning. Initially, service-learning sounds simple and straight forward. But to ensure that both service and learning occur, teachers must work through the details. Planning well the first time makes future service-learning even easier. Planning with others opens new doors for teacher collaboration and student learning.

Approach #1: Plan service-learning independently

Approach #2: Collaborate with colleagues, students, and others to plan service-learning

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Approach #1:

Plan service-learning independently

Benefits: Planning alone as a teacher takes less time and makes it easier to decide the service-learning focus and duration.

Example:

Teacher:	*Ava Mendelson*
Subject:	*Home Economics/Sewing*
Grade:	*8th*
School:	*Rosa M. Parks Middle School*
County:	*Montgomery*
Issue:	*Homelessness*

Situation:

Because Ava was the only teacher with a one-semester sewing class for eighth graders, she felt it necessary to plan independently from the other teachers. Ava also likes to have things planned in advance; after she took the MSSA training in the summer of 1993, she planned for her students to make sweat suits for homeless children.

Approach:

In the summer, Ava planned to spend five 45-minute class periods to introduce the issue of homelessness and service-learning, four weeks of class time to make the sweat suits, two periods to write letters to the homeless children, two periods for other reflection activities, and two field trips.

From September to late October, the students practiced their sewing skills before they began on the sweat suits. In late October, Ava contacted G Street Fabrics, which collects and distributes donated fabric and patterns. The fabric store gave her the materials she needed and the number of a local homeless shelter. Ava contacted the shelter to get the sizes of the children.

In early November, Ava introduced service-learning and the issue of homelessness to her class of 26 students. She also asked if any had parents who would be willing to drive for the field trips and sent a note home to those parents. In mid-November, Ava started collecting permission slips. She waited to put the exact dates down on the forms until she was sure when the students would complete the clothes. In late November, Ava set dates for the field trips and contacted the newspapers and the parents who agreed to drive.

The students wrote letters to the homeless children who would receive the sweat suits in early December. In mid-December, the entire class went to G Street Fabrics and took their sweat suits to display. The store gave the students snacks and goody bags full of sewing notions. Because of Ava's planning, parents, teachers, and staff drove the students. A few days later, a smaller group of students took the clothes to the shelter.

Result:

Ava's service-learning went smoothly because of her thorough planning; students, administrators, and teachers felt pleased and encouraged to build on this service-learning success. Students were proud after seeing a tangible result of their work and their pictures in the paper. The students learned the home economics course objectives by doing service for others. In addition, the part-time home economics teacher was so interested in what Ava and her students did that she planned her own service-learning.

An unexpected outcome of the service-learning was a former homeless child's reaction to the project. He did not want to make clothes for someone else, and his behavior caused Ava to find out more about him. She discovered he had been homeless. He didn't share his experience with the class, but he did share it in the letter for the sweat suit recipient. He said that he had been homeless and knew things could improve.

Approach #2:

Collaborate with colleagues, students, and others to plan service-learning.

Benefits: When teachers work together on service-learning, they gain support from each other for a new method of teaching. More resources are available because more people are involved. The students, community, and school become more invested in the project.

Example:

Teachers:	*Ellen Hayes and Pat Bratcher*
Subjects:	*Science and Social Studies*
Grade:	*6th*
School:	*Western Heights Middle School*
County:	*Washington*
Issue:	*Environment*

Situation:

Ellen and Pat taught on the same interdisciplinary team and were both willing to try service-learning. The service-learning began by focusing on biodiversity, but Ellen and Pat let their students change the focus to their own watershed and its effect on the Chesapeake Bay.

Approach:

Ellen and Pat had a joint planning period. They talked briefly twice a week during that time, after school, or during lunch. Usually, they identified the tasks that needed to be accomplished and divided them between Ellen's science class and Pat's social studies class. For example, when the fifth graders needed to learn about water-quality testing at the outdoor school, the sixth graders were eager to train them and Ellen organized the training through science. Likewise, when the students wanted to paint the storm drains, they had to get permission from the city council. Pat organized their testimony through social studies. The two teachers brought their classes together to share

information about twice a month. The other members of the sixth-grade team, language arts and math, also participated in the development and implementation of the service-learning curriculum. In math class the students measured the holding pond, and the language arts classes read books on environmental issues and reflected through writing and discussion.

Pat and Ellen say that each year's students have taken the environmental focus down different avenues. Last year the students focussed on water testing; this year they are doing more to judge the health of the stream by observing the living organisms within the water and advocating at the local level for environmental policies. The two teachers planned lessons around the students' interests.

Result:

Pat and Ellen reinvigorated their own enthusiasm by working together and by giving the students a partnering role in the process. Students learned that their opinions and ideas mattered and took more initiative as the service-learning progressed. Through team teaching and cooperative planning, Ellen and Pat connected their two subject areas and more effectively met a real need in the community.

What is work for you is a learning experience for students:

Let students take responsibility for . . .

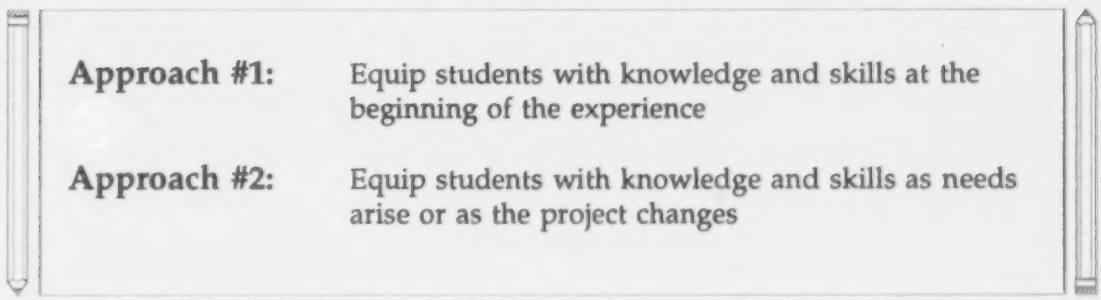
- paperwork
- phone calls
- checking details with administrators or staff
- errands within the school and within the neighborhood
- organizing materials
- fundraising
- research about the issue

If you give students some guidance and enough time, they can do the job and lighten your load!

Best Practice 7:

Equip Students With Knowledge and Skills Needed for Service

Acquiring and using skills and knowledge in service settings will be novel for most students. It may even be scary. To serve effectively, students may need to practice skills particular to the service setting, such as speaking up when working with hearing-impaired senior citizens or asking open-ended questions when tutoring. Despite their previous service, more knowledge about the issue and an improvement of skills will enhance students' learning and service experiences.



Approach #1: Equip students with knowledge and skills at the beginning of the experience

Approach #2: Equip students with knowledge and skills as needs arise or as the project changes

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Approach #1:

Equip students with knowledge and skills at the beginning of the experience.

Benefits: Students feel prepared to do the service and are valued participants because of their understanding and necessary skills.

Example:

Teacher:	*Craig Giles*
Subject:	*Social Studies/Advisory*
Grade:	*8th*
School:	*North Carroll Middle School*
County:	*Carroll*
Issue:	*Senior Citizens*

Situation:

Because the students did most of the service independently, Craig gave them the information and skills they needed at the beginning of the service experience. The initial preparation and reflection occurred during the student activity period every week but visits to the nursing home took place after school.

Approach:

The preparation took five class periods. During each session, Craig focused on skills, information, and student attitudes toward senior citizens.

Learning About the Issue: During the first session, Peggy Henderson, from the County Department on Aging, taught students about the issue of aging. They discussed what they had seen at nursing homes and with older people. Students then completed some activities to help them understand older people's limitations. During five class periods, the students traveled in groups of about four to six learning stations. At each station they completed a written reflection.

The stations included the following:

1. Unfair Hearing Test	Students listened to a tape that got progressively harder to understand as the sound became progressively worse.
2. Impaired Vision	Students wore eyeglasses with spots or tunnel vision.
3. Tasteless cookies	
4. Isolation	Students were blindfolded; others talked about them but not to them.
5. Sense of Touch	Students wrote with fingers taped together and put on earrings while wearing ski gloves.
6. Loss of Mobility	Students tried on clothing with one of their arms tied to their body or tried to walk with a partner when both legs were tied.

Students also watched and discussed clips of a Public Broadcasting series, *Old Enough to Care,* which shows older people being very active. Then students make a collage of older people doing things.

Learning the Right Attitude: To prepare them with the right attitudes to work with senior citizens, Craig had them discuss why they wanted to participate in this service-learning. They also listened to the song, "Where Have you Been" by Cathy Matea, which addresses aging issues. Craig gave students the lyrics and discussed the meaning of the song. One issue that arose was the importance of human contact.

Learning the Necessary Skills: Students practiced conversation and listening skills in class and for homework. They made a file card with some good conversation openers, such as information about birthdays and hobbies. Students made a 3" x 3" name tag and practiced introducing themselves to the seniors. To get help with difficult conversations, students watched a clip of *Driving Miss Daisy* that showed an old person becoming angry and discussed how they might deal with that situation.

Logistics: Students visited the nursing home as a group with Peggy and Craig. At the nursing home, the students and seniors came together to hear about what the nursing home expected of the eighth graders. The students then met the seniors and toured the facility. At school, students talked to a staff member

from Pets on Wheels in Carroll County, who taught students how to visit the nursing home with a pet.

Result:

Craig thoroughly introduced the students to the nursing home experience, making them more comfortable once they met their senior-citizen partners. Many students continued to visit their friends in the nursing home during the summer and throughout high school. After working together so much in the preparation, students were more open about sharing concerns and successes as they reflected. The preparation also served as a reference point for discussions throughout the service-learning.

Approach #2:

Equip students with knowledge and skills as needs arise or as the project changes.

Benefits: Teachers give students skills and information as needed so students always see their preparation as practical.

Example:

Teacher:	*Susan Falcone*
Subject:	*Child Development*
Grade:	*11th & 12th*
School:	*Loch Raven High School*
County:	*Baltimore County*
Issue:	*Child Development*

Situation:

In Susan's child-development class, students cared for preschool-aged children for four months out of the year. Students learned basic skills before the lab began but needed to add to those skills to adapt to the needs of particular children.

Approach:

In September, Susan equipped her students with information on child development to prepare them for the lab. They learned about the growth and development of children, as well as how to design interesting activities for preschoolers.

At the end of October, the 12 preschoolers arrived. Susan knew that there was one child with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The students had a very difficult time with him and found themselves yelling at him constantly. Although they had learned about child development, they hadn't learned about ADHD, and they needed new skills and information.

In Mid-November, after all of her students had been in the lab for a week with the ADHD child, Susan gave them some

sensitivity training. Each of her students played the role of the child singled out for his behavior problems. The students talked about how isolated they felt and decided they needed to change their approach. After thinking about subjects that really interested that particular child, the students developed some new activities and some changes they could make in the room to accommodate him better.

Over the next month, students used time during each seminar day to evaluate what had worked with the ADHD child, where they were unsuccessful, and how they were feeling.

Between Christmas vacation and early March there was no lab. During that time students worked on a variety of projects, but Susan used some class time to give students more information about ADHD. The child's mother came to class and discussed how she and her husband struggled because they deal with their son's disability very differently. Students researched ADHD and Ritalin, a drug commonly prescribed to children with the disability, by doing interviews, reading articles, and writing away for information.

Shortly before the children returned to the lab in early March, students spent time evaluating their experiences. They synthesized all the information they had compiled and planned for the next nine weeks.

Result:

The child with the disability improved his behavior as the students learned to respond to him positively. Learning theories suggest that adults learn best when they are ready to use the material they are learning. As young adults, Susan's students sought new information and skills as they encountered new challenges. This made the learning process dynamic.

10 ways to motivate students:

Part of every preparation process is getting students excited about the issue.

- Invite an older student that has participated in service-learning to speak
- Watch videos - such as *Today's Heroes*
- Survey parents and adults doing service
- Invite a person with personal experience with an issue to speak to the class
- Invite someone from the service organization to speak
- Organize a field trip to the service site so students can see the problem first hand
- Read about or research an issue
- Publicize what last year's service-learning students achieved to generate new interest
- Include students in the planning. How do they want to help their community?

Pitfalls and Safety Nets

Pitfall 1: 200 students and 1 teacher

Safety Net: Involve Other Adults

Small groups can make all the difference in the quality of the service-learning experience for students. Parents and other adult volunteers can oversee small groups while students perform the service. When students receive clear tasks, they are more productive and have more fun than if they were working in a large group. Also, students get a chance to exercise leadership skills and get to know one another and their adult facilitators better.

1 Recruit school staff

Katherine Potocki at Patapsco Middle School in Howard County took 55-60 students on each work day to the historic cemetery her students were preserving. To keep her students organized, she assigned one adult to every five to seven students. She enlisted the school nurse and bus driver as group leaders on service days, plus administrators and parents. Each group had a specific task. In this way, different student groups were involved in many different activities simultaneously.

2 Recruit parent volunteers

Debbie Klobucar at Stevensville Middle School in Queen Anne's County had three days of school cleanup as part of her service-learning. With at least 140 students, she needed other adults to help her supervise. She asked for at least one parent volunteer from each class and said, "It made the activity."

3 Recruit community volunteers

Kris Kerr at Colonel Richardson Middle School in Caroline County had ten community volunteers from the swim fund supervise the lap-around-the-track-a-thon. This event raised money for swimming lessons for disadvantaged children to prevent more drowning in the area.

Pitfall 2: 200 kids and no bus

Safety Nets: Find funds to cover costs or select a different site

1 Request money from the PTA, field trip budget, or grants to pay for the bus

When students visited Washington County's outdoor school to learn about water testing and biodiversity, Ellen Hayes at Western Heights Middle School in Washington County used grant money from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to cover the costs of transportation.

2 Ask parents, teachers, or other staff to provide transportation

Ava Mendelson at Rosa M. Parks Middle School in Montgomery County enlisted administrators and other teachers to drive students to the homeless shelter.

3 Bring the service needs to the school

Betty Lou LaBrie at Sudlersville Middle School in Queen Anne's County had the seniors come to her school on buses provided by the senior center.

4 Choose service sites within walking distance

Joey Hoffman's students at Middletown High School walked to the elementary school where they tutored.

5 Identify service-learning that can be done within the school

Dorothy Fletcher's students at Oakland Mills High School in Howard County tutored peers with disabilities for an entire school year.

Pat Barget's special education class at Cockeysville Middle School in Baltimore County cleaned, planted, and maintained a school courtyard.

6 Schedule service-learning to take place during the last period of the day

Bev Durham's service-learning class at Wicomico High School in Wicomico County required students to choose an issue and work 25 hours with a community-based agency. On the days they worked at their agencies, students arranged their own transportation. They left school at the

beginning of seventh period and did their service. Bev made sure students completed the appropriate permission slips.

7 Create a legally-acceptable student driver permission slip

Ken Rucker at Atholton High School in Howard County taught a service-learning class that allowed students to work independently. Students completed the Howard County permission slip for student drivers that required the signatures of parents, the student, and teacher, and committed each student to drive alone. Students were then able to drive themselves to the service site.

8 Do most of the service-learning in the classroom with only one or two field trips

Ava Mendelson at Rosa M. Parks Middle School in Montgomery County had her students do most of their service-learning in the classroom. They sewed sweat suits for homeless children, and when they finished, a group from the class took a trip to the shelter to deliver them.

9 Take a few students to the service site at a time

Norma Coles at Fairmount-Hartford Institute in Baltimore City took a few students at a time to the nursing home. Students measured residents' blood pressure and pulse and organized other activities such as a birthday party for residents.

Pitfall 3: Service-learning experience doesn't go well

Safety Nets: Involve the students in all aspects or choose a simple project

1 Leave time for mistakes and new ideas

Stephanie Bryant, a social studies teacher at McDonough High School in Charles County, and Jim O'Toole, a journalism teacher at Fallston High School in Harford County, both emphasize giving students time with the project. Students need time to make mistakes and shape the project. This can't happen if the teacher confines the project to one day or even a week. When Jim O'Toole's journalism students failed in their efforts with a local parent group, there was time to go back to their teacher, evaluate their strategy, and try something new.

2 Involve students in the process so they learn from failures and successes

Katherine Potocki, a social studies teacher at Patapsco Middle School in Howard County, shared how students learn from setbacks. Her students wrote a bill to protect historic cemeteries that did not pass the first time. They interviewed legislators who had helped them, developed new strategies, and passed the bill in the next session. In many of their group efforts, students would try something, flounder, and come back to Katherine for more help. This learning process took time.

3 The first time through, pick a simple service-learning experience that has a high chance of success.

Wendy Edstrom's English class at Wicomico High School in Wicomico County made one trip to the local Head Start center to read to the children and do a craft activity. Selection of books and preparation of activities did not take long, and the students and the children had a wonderful time. Now both Wendy and her students are encouraged by their success and would like to do more. Wendy's colleagues, who didn't think her students would behave, now know how successful they can be.

Pitfall 4: Students Participate in a "Thon"

Safety Net: Create a context for fundraising by teaching students about the social issue

When the American Heart Association engages a teacher and class on one of their fundraising activities, they see the purpose as twofold: to raise money and to raise awareness of heart diseases. Students learn about the mission of the Heart Association along with information about the heart. Students then share what they learn when they ask for donations, thereby educating the public at large.

Action for the Homeless, which runs the statewide Adopt-a-Shelter program, recommends that teachers educate students about the issue of homelessness before they perform any service. Action for the Homeless teaches students about the issue on a local and national level, providing profiles and statistics about the homeless in their communities. They also provide information on the needs of homeless people, and they place students in contact with local homeless shelters. If the shelter's primary need is money, students may organize a "thon" but will do so with a much better understanding of the needs they are trying to address.

Time Bomb:

Many teachers mentioned the difficulty in planning service-learning when the master schedule constrains them to 48 minute periods. If you have an active SIT team or sympathetic principal, you may be able to add some flexibility to the schedule to accommodate service-learning. Teachers have found the *four-period* day, flexible *advisory periods*, and *interdisciplinary teaming* very conducive to quality service-learning.

Glossary of Terms

Infusion: Teachers use service-learning as a method for teaching curricular content and skills in their subject areas instead of adding it as a separate activity. Teachers review their course objectives and modify their lesson plans to incorporate service-learning into the curriculum. Teachers can infuse service-learning into a unit, or into the activities for the entire year.

Maryland Service-Learning Graduation Requirement:

Students entering ninth grade in the fall of 1993, and all future classes, will have to meet the requirement. Students are required to meet one of the following based on their school system's choice for implementation:

a. 75 hours of student service with preparation and reflection which, at the discretion of the local school system, may begin during the middle grades; or

b. A locally designed program in student service that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools.

This amounts to an average of ten hours of service over seven years. Depending on the local plan, a student might choose to perform all 75 hours during one year. All districts chose the local option. Some students will perform service outside of school hours while others will do their service during the school day. Most districts chose to infuse at least a portion of service-learning into their curricula.

MSPAP: Maryland School Performance Assessment Program is a strategy for improving public education launched by the Maryland State Department of Education in 1989. One component of the assessment is a series of "criterion-referenced tests" that require students to apply what they know and can do to solve problems, reason, explain, recommend, and display other "higher order" thinking skills. The primary focus of the MSPAP is *school performance*. Students take the tests in grades 3, 5, and 8 in relation to the Maryland Learning Outcomes. These outcomes focus on what students should know and be able to do in language usage, reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. (Taken from the introduction to the MSPAP Public Release Task on Child Labor for Fifth Grade)

MSSA: Maryland Student Service Alliance. A public-private initiative of the Maryland State Department of Education founded in 1988, the organization is devoted to creating successful students and active, engaged citizens by institutionalizing service-learning in Maryland public schools. MSSA fosters teacher and student leadership, provides technical assistance to teachers and school districts, visits schools to observe service-learning programs, and trains teachers. MSSA also develops curricula and supporting materials on service-learning.

Partner: Someone in the community who is involved with the school's service-learning program. Partners contribute their resources and/or expertise to the student service-learning, but they also may benefit from the contact. A partner might be a nursing home that uses student servers, a local business that provides materials for a craft project at a Head Start center, etc. At its best, a partnership results in the community members, the teacher, and the students developing respect for one another's efforts and acting as a team to address a problem.

Preparation: Provides a link between service-learning activities and specific curriculum objectives, while preparing the student to perform the service.

Reflection: A thoughtful response, written or verbal, at any stage of the service-learning project. Reflection includes some response from a peer or adult, and allows time for students to express their thoughts, feelings, what they learned, questions, etc.

School-Based Service-Learning: Service-learning that takes place within the school, usually with some link to the curriculum.

Service-Learning: Students learn and apply academic, social, and personal skills to improve their community, continue their individual growth, and become better citizens. Service-learning focuses not only on the service, but on the student learning. Service-learning is appropriate for all students and all curricular areas. Other terms often confused with service-learning are:

Community Service: Broadly defined, community service is work that benefits the community. However, it is also used for court-ordered or alternative-sentencing programs. The term implies an emphasis on service and not on a structured learning component.

Experiential Education: A broader term for educational approaches that emphasize learning by doing. Service-learning is a form of experiential education.

Internship: Interns are usually untrained but capable students working under a mentor and given great responsibility for defined projects during a short time. Internships are often unpaid.

Volunteer Service: Volunteerism refers to people who choose on their own to perform some service to others without pay.

Work-study: A career-related, school- and work-based learning situation. One part of the day the student reports to a job site. The job site is selected and approved by both the student and the work-study coordinator. Work-study includes the

work-study coordinator visiting the site, and the student having a supervisor on site. Usually the work-study goes on all year and the student is evaluated by the supervisor. The student then sees the evaluation, and it is turned into a grade that goes on his/her report card and counts toward graduation credit. The primary motivator is experience, not money, but the student gets paid, usually above minimum wage, because work study jobs usually require some previous training.

Service-Learning Action: Making a difference through acts of caring by personal contact in the community, and/or through actions of citizenship. There are three basic types of action:

Direct Service: Working face-to-face with the recipient of the service to meet his or her needs.

Indirect Service: Working behind the scenes to channel resources to meet a community need. Examples are organizing blood drives and doing environmental service.

Advocacy: Making a difference through political action and/or public education.

Service-Learning Class: An alternative to infusion. A class is devoted to one particular activity, such as tutoring or peer mediation, or to a variety of service-learning activities.

Service-Learning Club: Students devote time outside of class to a service activity.

Service-Learning Coordinator: A teacher or administrator who keeps track of service-learning activities around the school and provides technical assistance. The coordinator may also keep records on individual students and their progress towards meeting the service-learning requirement.

Other Service-Learning Resources

Curricula Available

Maryland Student Service Alliance
200 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
(410)767-0358

Elementary Service-Learning Guide
Middle School Service-Learning Guide
High School Service-Learning Guide
Special Education Service-Learning Guide

Close Up Foundation
(in conjunction with the Constitutional Rights Foundation)
44 Canal Center Plaza
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703)706-3300

Active Citizenship Today Field Guide

Chesapeake Bay Foundation
162 Prince George St.
Annapolis, MD 21401
(410)269-0481

Chesapeake Choices and Challenges: An Integrated Curriculum for Middle School

National Society for Experiential Education
3509 Haworth Drive, Ste. 207
Raleigh, NC 27609-7229
(919)787-3263

Service-Learning Reader: Reflections and Perspectives on Service

MSSA MATERIALS INVOICE/ORDER FORM

SHIP TO:

Name:_____
School/Organization:_____
Address:_____
Telephone Number:_____

Make checks payable to the **Maryland Student Service Alliance**.
Payment or purchase order **must** be received before delivery. Prices include shipping and handling.
Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

SEND ORDERS TO:

Maryland Student Service Alliance
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
Phone (410) 767-0358
Fax (410) 333-2379 TDD (410) 333-6442

ITEM	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Teacher's video: "The Courage to Care, The Strength to Serve" (revised 1994)	$10.00	_____	$_____
Maryland's Best Practices: An Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning	$10.00	_____	$_____
Teacher Training Manual (red book)	$15.00	_____	$_____
Service-Learning Project Plan Book (purple book)	$ 5.00	_____	$_____
The Training Toolbox: A Guide to Service-Learning Training	$35.00	_____	$_____
Motivational Posters (set of 4)	$10.00	_____	$_____
Service-Learning Curricula:			
Elementary School	$20.00	_____	$_____
Middle School	$20.00	_____	$_____
High School	$30.00	_____	$_____
Special Education	$25.00	_____	$_____
Service-Learning Training Package: includes A Guide to Service-Learning Training, Teacher Training Manual, Service-Learning Project Plan Book and "The Courage to Care, The Strength to Serve" video.	$55.00	_____	$_____
	TOTAL	_____	$_____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Date order rec'd: _____
Check/PO #: _____

Date payment rec'd: _____
Date order filled: _____